POLITICAL LECTURES,

(No. II.)

SKETCHES

OF THE

History of Prosecutions

FOR

POLITICAL OPINION;

WITH

STRICTURES

ON THE

LATE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

Court of Justiciary in Scotland.

THE SECOND EDITION.

To which is now added,

A DEDICATION to the TWO INDEPENDENT GRAND JURIES who rejected the malicious Attempts of Persecution for the Suppression of these Lectures.

BY J. THELWALL.

Alas, poor England! what will become of thee, if thou look not the sooner into thine own Privileges, and maintain not thine own lawful Liberty?

PRYNN's Harangue from the Pillory. STATE TRIALS.

LONDON:

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TO THE

TWO RESPECTABLE GRAND JURIES

OF THE

MANOR and LIBERTY of the SAVOY,

Who, by their ſpirited Adherence to Truth and Juſtice, and their Determination to be directed by the Evidence of their own Senſes, baffled the inſidious Machinations of the Tools of a STATE INQUISITOR, and reſcued the Author from the diſappointed Gripe of Perſecution, this Second Edition of a Lecture upon a *Subject*, at leaſt, eminently intereſting and important, is dedicated, by their grateful Fellow-Citizen,

Thurſday, May 8, 1794. *JOHN THELWALL.*

It may not be amiſs briefly to ſtate to the public the occaſion of this Dedication.

At the Court-Leet of this diſtrict, held on Thurſday, the firſt of this month, an officious informer, in the neighbourhood of the Lecture-room, preſented a copy of the former edition of this Lecture to the Grand Jury, and wiſhed them to make it the foundation of a proſecution for libel. The Jury, however, refuſed to be made the tools of ſo malignant a deſign, and obſerved, with becoming dignity and independence, that they were not, in matters of ſuch importance, to be taken by ſurpriſe; and that *the book, if it did contain any libellous matter, ought to be repeatedly read, and maturely deliberated upon by the Jury, before they pronounced a cenſure upon it that might ſubject the author to ſuch ſerious conſequences.* This attempt was accordingly unſucceſsful.

Mr. Reeves, however, the worſhipful Steward of the diſtrict, did not ſuffer the matter to drop; and a new grand jury, for the enſuing year, being ſworn in, his charge, as I am informed, conſiſted almoſt entirely of animadverſions upon "the *ſeditious* Lectures in Beaufort-buildings; which, he ſaid, muſt not be permitted to go unnoticed; they being in reality much more dangerous than *all the tumbling-houſes*§ in the metropolis. They were calculated," he affirmed, "to inflame the public mind againſt every thing *great* and *glorious* in the Britiſh Conſtitution;" (ſuch as *Spies, Informers, ſinecure Placemen, Penſioners, unneceſſary wars, inordinate taxation*, and the like!!) "and that I had even agitated the paſſions of my auditory to ſuch a degree, that they jumped upon the benches, and cried out, with one voice, *No King—no Parliament*, and *no Laws!*"

But the buſineſs was over done. The doſe was too ſtrong. The good ſenſe of the jury, nauſeated at the very ſcent of the abſurd,

§ Some repreſentations of nuiſances of this ſort had been made.

ity; and the charge of nuiſance being brought by the ſame *loyal gentleman*, as had preſented the pamphlet, and being ſupported by the voluntary teſtimony of a Mr. Scott, a brandy merchant in the Buildings, the jury determined, this being an affair upon which every one might have an opportunity of forming his own judgment, that they ought themſelves to be witneſſes to the fact, before they pretended to decide. The court being, therefore, held over, by adjournment, to this day, (Thurſday, May 8,) the foreman and other jurors attended at the Lecture-room during the two intervening nights, to make their obſervations. The reſult was, that being perfectly ſatisfied of the legality of the meeting, and the good order with which it was conducted, they returned the following anſwer—"On hearing and duly conſidering the com-"plaint of ſeveral of the inhabitants of Beaufort-buildings, re-"ſpecting the Lectures delivered by Mr. Thelwall, the Jury are "of opinion, that they cannot preſent the meeting at the ſaid Mr. "Thelwall's Lectures as a *public nuiſance*."

This was a very unexpected ſtroke to certain honourable protectors of the LIBERTY and PROPERTY of *placemen and penſioners*; for infinite pains had been taken, by canvaſſing from houſe to houſe, to collect a heap of complaints together; and Mr. Steward Reeves, after an *aweful pauſe*, that excited the *tender feelings* of the aſſembly, began, with ſome heſitation, to remonſtrate that ſixteen *reſpectable* GENTLEMEN in the neighbourhood had complained of nuiſance, upon oath; but the foreman replied, in his former language, that the Jury had maturely conſidered the whole of the circumſtances, and that THEY FOUND NO NUISANCE.

It is worth while, perhaps, to obſerve, that the foundations, or rather *pretences* for the charge of nuiſance were, that upon the lecture nights, four or five hundred people went up and down my ſtairs; and that a number of perſons collected about the door, who behaved in a rude and improper manner, and that therefore *there might be a riot*. The good ſenſe of the Jury could not but obſerve the tendency of this might-be evidence: ſince if a man is to be *indicted*, becauſe it is poſſible a riot may hereafter happen at his door, he may by and by, by a ſimilar mode of calculation, come to be *hanged*, becauſe there is a poſſibility that murder may be committed by ſome deſperado under his window.

That perſons of both ſexes have aſſembled round my door, and behaved *ill* enough, I readily admit. But I appeal to theſe alarmiſts—theſe *pretended lovers of peace and order*, who made this the foundation of their complaint, whether they do not know that theſe were their own ſervants, who, if not ſent for the purpoſe, were, at leaſt, permitted by *them* to ſtand, for three hours together, in the ſtreet, inſulting every body that came in and out, with all the malice of vulgar ridicule. But theſe *Gentlemen* may now, perhaps, find time to look to the affairs of their own houſes and families, and keep their loquacious lacqueys at home; and if they do not, the vigilance and impartiality of a reſpectable grand jury may teach them, that *every man's caſtle is to be alike defended*; and that chaſtiſement is to fall *not* upon the *inſulted*, but upon the *offending party*.

POLITICAL LECTURES, &c.

Profecutions for Political Opinions.

CITIZENS!

"THE art of drawing indictments, and contriving "innuendoes, and ſo manufacturing libels," ſays Mr. Gurney, in his manly and eloquent defence of Citizen Eaton, "is indeed a curious art;" and, as it has lately flouriſhed in a very extraordinary degree, it may be worth while to enquire into the hiſtory of its riſe and progreſs, and the means by which it has attained its preſent celebrity. Did the plan of this courſe of lectures, and the neceſſary attention to variety permit, I ſhould be deſirous of doing this in a very ample manner, ſo as to lay the whole maſs of iniquity before the public eye in one collected view; being thoroughly perſuaded that the complete proſpect of the *folly* and *wickedneſs* of proſecutions for opinion and popular inveſtigation, and the conſequent miſery in which they muſt of neceſſity involve ſo many of the moſt virtuous of mankind, would convince every candid mind, of the immediate neceſſity of putting a period to a ſyſtem which never did, nor ever can be rationally expected to anſwer the purpoſes of thoſe by whom it is adopted. But this is a taſk much too elaborate to be attempted on the preſent occaſion.

The records contained in ſo many immenſe folios of ſtate trials, the hiſtorical facts with which thoſe records are connected, and the innumerable *trials which propa-*

gate the ſeditions, and will *perpetuate the memory of the perſecutions* of the preſent reign, are not to be compreſſed into a ſingle lecture, or even into the ſmall courſe of lectures into which it is my purpoſe to divide this ſubject.

The ſlighteſt ſketch, however, if I ſhould be fortunate enough to be at all judicious in my ſelection, or pertinent in my remarks, cannot fail of being eminently uſeful; eſpecially as it will tend to illuſtrate, in a conſiderable degree, what is the *real* difference (if *any*) with reſpect to POLITICAL LIBERTY, between the preſent ſituation of this country, and that in which our anceſtors were placed in the diſgraceful and tyrannic reigns of the Stewarts. It will ſhew us, alſo, in ſome degree, what were the boaſted advantages of the REVOLUTION in 1688; and what proviſions, neceſſary to the enjoyment of a RATIONAL FREEDOM, were neglected at that memorable period.

In looking over the records of theſe events, the firſt circumſtance which muſt ſtrike even the moſt ſuperficial obſerver, is the vaſt diſproportion between the political proſecutions of ancient and modern times. Reign after reign, and year after year, teems with increaſing fruitfulneſs of perſecution.

The evil is conſtantly extending:—ſpreading itſelf (if ſuch a tranſition of metaphor may be admitted) like an inverted pyramid, and threatening, if the progreſs ſhould continue in a ſimilar ratio, to eclipſe entirely the light of rational enquiry, and leave to the ignorant and affrighted crowd beneath nothing but the gloomy ſhadow of an ill concerted ſtructure, ready every inſtant to cruſh them with its enormous weight.

From the commencement of the reign of Richard I. to the death of Mary, a period of one hundred and eighty years, the State Trials preſent us with but five inſtances of political proſecutions; and the firſt of theſe is againſt the miniſters of a weak and obſtinate prince, for ſequeſtrating the royal revenues, and turning to their own perſonal intereſt, and that of their relations and dependants, thoſe public treaſures which ought to have been devoted to the protection and happineſs of the peo-

ple;

ple: a crime not always enquired into with the keeneſt avidity, nor chaſtiſed with the ſincereſt indignation. In ſhort there is reaſon to believe that if offences of this nature had always been ſcrutiniſed with the ſame ſeverity which we have known to be exerciſed againſt ſeditious allegories and libels againſt game cocks, the records of political proſecutions might have been ſwelled to thrice their preſent bulk, and the decrees of vindictive juſtice might have ſent to Botany Bay or to the ſcaffold ſome of the moſt arrogant miniſters that ever commanded the implicit confidence of a venal Houſe of Commons.

The reign of Elizabeth alone, a period of only five and forty years, exhibits a black collection of eleven important trials; among which we have ſome as diſgraceful to the Engliſh character as any that ſtand upon record—ſome recent examples of lawleſs perſecution alone excepted.

Among the ſhining tranſactions of this reign, ſo eminently extolled by the zeal of Proteſtant writers, we may particularly mention the trials of Mary, Queen of Scots (whoſe greateſt crime againſt her *couſin Queen*, at leaſt, was that of really excelling in all thoſe graceful accompliſhments of mind and perſon to which the coarſe and arrogant Elizabeth ſo ridiculouſly pretended) and the perſecution and capital condemnation of John Udall, a Puritan miniſter, for *felonioufly* publiſhing his opinion (for *libel* was not then in faſhion, and *felony* was the denomination of crime he was charged with) concerning the religious eſtabliſhment of the times.

James I. who commenced his career of tyranny with procuring the illegal condemnation of that great ornament of letters and his country, Sir Walter Raleigh, whom, ſeveral years after, he diſpatched by a legalized murder, did not fail to improve upon the example which his couſin queen had ſet him. Nor did *baby* Charles, as his father uſed ſo accurately to call him (for his character never attained the ſteady conſiſtency of manhood) reſign the dear prerogative of political proſecution: ſo that we find the State Trials in thirty-five years, to the

14th of Charles the First, ſwelled to more than double the extent of all which had preceded during the ſpace of two hundred and twenty-four years, reckoning thoſe for libel and ſedition only: for I exclude thoſe of a leſs political nature, though *they* aroſe, alſo, as in reality all *crimes* and *proſecutions* do, from the particular vices of the exiſting government.

Soon after this (in the year 1640) proſecutions began to change ſides; and from thence to the *unhappy* RESTORATION in 1660, Mr. Gurney would have found no occaſion to complain that political proſecutions were alone directed againſt thoſe who "reflected, "or were ſuppoſed to reflect upon the regal or ariſto- "cratical branch of the conſtitution;" and that "if a "man would but exalt theſe, at the expence of the de- "mocratical part, he might libel the conſtitution with "impunity." "THE MAJESTY OF THE PUBLIC," had for once its jealous guardians and avengers. "The "ſacred rights of the people" could no longer "be "inſulted, degraded, and vilified" with impunity, while for every "ſarcaſm that fell on the power and authority "of kings or nobles," the thunder of "miniſterial "vengeance was inſtantly hurled at the head of the "unfortunate offender." Democracy triumphed for a while over the tyranny of courts; miniſters experienced the day of retribution; and the ermined robes, and ſanctimonious trappings of Judges and ambitious prelates, could no longer protect them from the puniſhments to which their official libels againſt public liberty ſo juſtly entitled them.

It is to be obſerved, however, to the honour of theſe times, that actual offences againſt the order and happineſs of the people, were the only objects of ſtate proſecution; and that no inquiſitorial divan ſearched for innuendoes, and concealed libels, in every little tale and pamphlet. The magnanimity of Cromwell in this particular, might put to ſhame (if their cheeks were liable to bluſh) the petty jealouſy of hereditary princes. "If my govern- "ment is made to ſtand," ſays he, returning to Harrington his *Oceana*, a work written in vindication of thoſe Repub-

Republican principles which the uſurpations of Cromwell had overthrown, "it will never be ſhaken with "paper bullets." Cromwell was a man of ſenſe, and had ſome foundation for this manly confidence. Though a uſurper and a hypocrite, who, after bringing the tyrant to the block, had the art and management to fruſtrate the virtuous deſigns of the brave Republicans of that era, yet his reign was unſullied by any act of folly and oppreſſion. Public juſtice was never adminiſtered with greater purity, nor public happineſs better protected, than under his adminiſtration. He had therefore but little to fear from libels and ſeditious paſquinades, which muſt always have truth upon their ſide, if we expect them to take effect. "In no time," ſays Burnet, who is no very partial witneſs, "the Highlands were "kept in better order than during the uſurpation." He might have ſaid the ſame of the whole empire. "There "was good juſtice done, and vice ſuppreſſed and puniſhed; "ſo that we always reckon thoſe eight years of uſurpa-"tion, a time of great peace and proſperity." The true reaſon this why the State Trials exhibit, during the *protectorate*, no ſingle inſtance of proſecution for libel or ſeditious converſation. The cavaliers, indeed, agitated the country with repeated ſtruggles, to reſtore the golden calf of their idolatry; and the common crime of all governments, I mean the infliction of a violent death, fell upon the necks of ſome few whoſe inveteracy to the ſyſtem then eſtabliſhed, would be ſatisfied with no medium between the block and the final overthrow of the power againſt which they attempted to riſe in arms: but, in other reſpects, the adminiſtration of Cromwell was not only equitable, but honourable and happy.

In ſhort—It is no libel, I hope, againſt our *happy* government, though it is certainly a truth—that, whatever *monarchiſts* and *divine-rights men* may inculcate to the contrary, in plays, romance books, and mock hiſtories, even uſurpations (I ſpeak not of uſurpations effected by *foreign mercenaries)* are generally more favourable to the ſpirit of liberty, and the happineſs of the bulk of the people, than the regular ſucceſſion of here-

ditary

ditary monarchy. The uſurper is generally promoted by ſome perſonal merit; the conſciouſneſs of which elevates his ſoul above the mean and paltry jealouſies, from which ſo many acts of tyranny and oppreſſion will be found to originate. Beſides, being unfortified by any of the ſuperſtitious prejudices which rivet the attachment of a people to their hereditary ſovereigns, they are obliged to court that popularity, by the wiſdom and generoſity of their proceedings, which the others lay claim to, by virtue of their royal begetting; and to ſupply, by attention to the public welfare, the deficiency of legal title. Add to this, that a conſiderable part, at leaſt, of the people, muſt have given their conſent and aſſiſtance to the elevation of the uſurper, while the *hereditary* DOLT may take poſſeſſion of the ſeat of power, in *open contempt* of the whole; and may fortify the ſuperſtition that upholds his *divine authority* with the wealth extorted by his rapacity from the labour of thoſe whom he oppreſſes.——Let me not, however, be miſtaken, as an advocate for *uſurpation*. The price is always greater than the change is worth; and of all the different kinds of *regal* government, I own it to be my opinion that hereditary monarchy is the beſt.

From the reſtoration of Charles II. the evil I am inveſtigating flouriſhed with encreaſing malignity. He promiſed, indeed, a general indemnity; but no ſooner was he fixed in the ſeat of power, than he began to employ all the engines of deſpotiſm for the deſtruction of the friends of liberty, and to glut his kingly appetite for vengeance; ſo that many of the very perſons who had been moſt inſtrumental in his re-eſtabliſhment, ſoon began to repent them of the evil they had brought upon the country. "When the Earl of Southamp-"ton," ſays Dr. Burnet, "came to ſee what he was "like to prove, he ſaid once in great wrath to Chancel-"lor Hyde" (who had been one of the chief inſtruments towards the King's being reſtored without treaty or reſtrictions) "it was to him they owed all "they either felt or feared; for, if he had not poſ-"ſeſſed them in all his letters with ſuch an opinion of

"the

" the King, they would have taken care to have put it " out of his power either to do himſelf or them any " miſchief, which was like to be the effect of truſting " him ſo entirely." *Burnet's Own Times.*

From this time we muſt drop all pretence of individual enumeration, and count the political proſecutions of the times, not by the numbers who ſuffered by them, but by the unwieldy volumes that record them. Party waged war againſt party, and faction was glutted with the blood of faction, and two huge folios of a thouſand pages *imperfectly* record the perſecuting tyranny of the Houſe of Stewart. Yet even in the times of theſe lawleſs tyrants I have met with no ſingle inſtance of tranſportation to the antipodes for fourteen years for writing or for ſpeaking in favour of political reform. To theſe William III. " upon whom," ſays Gerrald, " as upon a " *mendicant* our anceſtors beſtowed the crown of theſe " realms" added another of theſe enormous volumes; and the ſame ſpirit of faction and perſecution ſtill continuing, we find the cloſe of the reign of George I. marked by the completion of the ſixth of theſe ſtupendous monuments of political intolerance and proſcription of human reaſon.

I make this calculation from the edition of the State Trials only which was laying before me at the time I was preparing this lecture. But upon comparing them with the page of hiſtory, and the notes and references I thought it neceſſary to appeal to, I find it to be far from a perfect collection; and that, if I had time and opportunity to make a more correct ſtatement, the growing enormity would be ſtill more glaring. But were we to extend the calculations to the preſent time, what would then appear the magnitude of the evil? Were we to enumerate only the proſecutions for political opinion—for libel and ſedition, during the laſt four and thirty years —nay, were we only to bring in one collected maſs the proſcriptions and proſecutions, the trials, fines and puniſhments, the diſcord and ruin among families, the diſtreſs and miſery, nay in ſome inſtances, death—the worſt of all deaths, the murderous diſeaſes of a gaol—which

have

have been inflicted upon individuals during the laſt eighteen months, the tale would I am ſure be too monſtrous to be borne in ſilence; and the reflection of the nation would be awakened to the purſuit of ſome adequate remedy to ſo enormous an evil.

The latter part of this taſk appears to me, I own, to be of ſuch conſiderable importance that I cannot but ſeriouſly recommend it to the attention of ſome perſon who has leiſure and opportunity to collect the neceſſary materials; and I will be bold to ſay that ſuch a catalogue of political and moral depravity as theſe proceedings would preſent, has never yet been exhibited in any period of Britiſh Hiſtory; nor could a publication be produced that would ſo deeply affect the public mind as the inquiſitorial hiſtory of Britain, from the firſt proclamation againſt the writings of PAINE to the condemnation of JOSEPH GERRALD.

To return more immediately to my ſubject: it is natural to the human mind, upon obſerving this diſproportion of events at different periods, to enquire into the cauſes of ſuch diſproportion; and the queſtion naturally reſulting from the preceding ſtatement, or delineation of the general outlines of this hiſtory is, how it ſhould happen, that, in proportion as the world has grown civilized and refined, the malignity of perſecution for opinion ſhould have apparently increaſed, and Government ſhould have held out increaſing terrors to retard the benign progreſs of human intellect.

I am aware, Citizens, and I wiſh to take no undue advantages, that there is ſome deluſion in theſe appearances—that the records of earlier times are not ſo well preſerved as of thoſe that are more recent; that military executions, at former periods, frequently prevented the neceſſity of legal condemnations; and the ſword was frequently drawn to decide thoſe differences of political opinion, which now vent themſelves in a libel, and terminate in a ſentence to Newgate, or Botany Bay. Attached by no prejudices to the manners and inſtitutions of antiquity, and uninfluenced by any deſire to impoſe upon you by the cant of old-faſhioned moraliſts

liſts, about the degeneracy of a world, which, in reality, I believe has been conſtantly in a ſtate of progreſſion and improvement, I am ready to admit the force of theſe arguments, and to concede, that when men are too ignorant to communicate their thoughts, and improve their intellects by political inveſtigation, they reſign themſelves to the ſole dominion of their paſſions, and bearing oppreſſion with an abject ſpirit till human ſufferance can endure no longer, they ſpeak no ſedition but with the pike or battle-axe in their hands, and publiſh no libels but what are written in the blood of their oppreſſors. When this is the ſtate of ſociety I grant that proſecutions for libels muſt of neceſſity be rare; but tumult and rebellion muſt be proportionately frequent. And as *privation* and *negation* are eſſentially the ſame, and may tend but too naturally to the ſame lamentable conſequences, I would make this an additional argument for exhorting thoſe who are in power to relinquiſh their mad project of ſuppreſſing the progreſs of free enquiry, did I not know that ſuch a project muſt of neceſſity prove abortive, and that "the preſs is, in reality, an engine ſufficiently ſubtile to elude the malice of the moſt vigilant police."

But the argument concerning the turbulent ignorance of the times can apply only to the firſt of thoſe periods into which I have divided my ſtatement. The age of feudal violence and perſonal ſlavery had terminated before the aſcent of Elizabeth to the throne, and the thick clouds of ignorance were beginning to diſperſe from the minds of a conſiderable portion of the people. A new complexion of affairs begins to diſplay itſelf to the hiſtorian in the reign of Henry VII. a faint dawning of which had made its appearance in the times of Henry IV. and V. but had been inveloped again by the ſtorms of civil war that raged between the houſes of York and Lancaſter. This, as it gave a different turn to the purſuits and proſpects of the ſubject, called forth a different ſort of exertion in thoſe to whoſe excluſive privileges and enjoyments this expanſion of intellect threatened to be hoſtile.

"About this period," ſays Hume, at the beginning of his hiſtory of the ſucceeding reign, "the minds of men, "throughout all Europe, but eſpecially in England, "ſeem to have undergone a general, but inſenſible revo- "lution. Though letters had been revived in the pre- "ceding age, they ſeem to have been chiefly cultivated "by men of ſedentary profeſſion; nor had they, till now, "begun to ſpread themſelves in any degree, among men "in the world. Arts both mechanical and liberal were "every day receiving great improvements. Navigation "had extended itſelf over the whole globe. Travelling "was ſecure; and the general ſyſtem of politics in Eu- "rope was become more enlarged and comprehenſive. "In conſequence of this univerſal fermentation, the "ideas of men enlarged themſelves on all ſides. In "England the love of freedom, which, unleſs checked, "flouriſhes extremely in all liberal natures, acquired "new force, and was regulated by more enlarged views, "ſuitable to that cultivated underſtanding, which be- "came every day more common among men of birth "and education. A familiar acquaintance with the "precious remains of antiquity, excited in every gene- "rous breaſt a paſſion for a limited conſtitution, and "begat an emulation of thoſe manly virtues which the "Greek and Roman authors, by ſuch animating exam- "ples, as well as pathetic expreſſions, recommend to "us."

Then it was that the altered and improved condition of human intellect, induced thoſe ſtate jugglers whoſe oppreſſive privileges were likely to be ſhaken by the growth and exerciſe of theſe new faculties, to invent a new ſpecies of crime, and declare it an offence againſt ſociety for rational beings to exerciſe that underſtanding which God or Nature beſtowed upon them as their diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic. Then it was, to adopt the maſterly and accurate language of Mr. Gurney, "when the invention of printing had introduced poli- "tical diſcuſſion, and when *ſeditious publications* (that "is to ſay *publications expoſing the corruptions and abu- "ſes of government, and the profligacy of miniſters*)

"made

" made their appearance," that the firſt ſyſtematic attempt was made to circumſcribe the progreſs of the human mind. " The controul of the preſs was placed in " admirable hands, a licenſer, the king's Attorney Gene- " ral, and a court of inquiſition called the Star Chamber. " The licenſer was to ſtifle in its birth every thing ob- " noxious to the miniſters. But if any thing happened " to eſcape his hands, then the Attorney General, by " his information *ex officio*, carried the unfortunate au- " thor or publiſher" (frequently author, publiſher, and printer altogether) " before the board of inquiſitors, who " never failed to adminiſter a ſentence, adapted by its " ſeverity," (as they weakly imagined) " to deter others " from ſimilar efforts to enlighten the people. It was " in that infernal inquiſition, that the purity of the law " of libel was debauched:" for " the ancient law of " libel," as Mr. Gurney had before obſerved, and as in the progreſs of this examination I ſhall prove, " did " not differ from other criminal law. It was there that " the monſtrous maxim was firſt broached that *truth* " could be a *falſe*, ſcandalous, and ſeditious libel! ! !"

The iniquity however, in a conſiderable degree defeated itſelf. For not only does the human mind, when not debauched and enervated by long continued luxury, revolt with forceful indignation from the oppreſſions that would chain its faculties—not only does the natural elaſticity of the human character generally riſe with an energy proportioned to the attempts that are made to depreſs it, but the violent and bare-faced injuſtice of the Star Chamber rouſed the general indignation of the people, and " the intolerable oppreſſion of this in- " quiſition brought on its *violent*," I cannot ſay untimely " death." And notwithſtanding the ſanction which has been given by a large majority in the Houſe of Commons to certain late proceedings, ſuch, ere it is long, I have but little doubt, will be in ſome meaſure, the fate of the court of juſticiary. From all ranks of people the murmur of indignation begins already to be heard; and the more the point is inveſtigated the greater will be the deteſtation: for never yet have I met with an indi-

 vidual,

vidual, nor heard of one (out of the Houſe of Commons) how full ſoever of the bitterneſs of invective againſt *Jacobins* and levellers, who would libel his underſtanding by advancing an argument in favour of theſe unprecedented ſentences. Public opinion is in fact the pillar of every ſpecies and department of government; and a court of judicature (I will not call it a court of juſtice) regarded with ſuch ſentiments as theſe ſentences have inſpired cannot long continue a court of judicature to any effective purpoſe. When judges, in an enlightened age like this, depart from the moderation, the temper and humanity ſo eſſential to their ſtation, farewell to the reſpect and veneration without which their office is but a *vacuum*, and themſelves are *non entities*. Deprived of theſe, the ermined robe and enſigns of authority are converted into the trappings of a buffoon, and all that was intended to command our reverence provokes our ridicule and contempt. On the other hand, the characters and conduct of the ſufferers cannot fail of making an impreſſion upon the public mind eminently favourable to the cauſe for which they ſuffer, and ultimately diſgraceful to thoſe who are the authors of their condemnation. The eloquent pleadings of MUIR, the gentle manners and unblemiſhed life of PALMER; the honeſt ſimplicity of SKIRVING, the cheerful fortitude and inflexible perſeverance of MARGAROT, and the torrent of manly and perſuaſive eloquence which roufed all the noble and generous feelings of an admiring audience at the trial of GFRRALD cannot fail of inſpiring the ſenſations that are due not only to the individuals who have ſubmitted ſo cheerfully to this martyrdom, but to the juries alſo that could ſhut their ears againſt conviction, and the judges who could declare from the bench that "*the purity of their principles was an aggravation of* "*their guilt.*" The firm and diſintereſted manner in which the latter of theſe virtuous and gallant Citizens, together with that eſtimable young man Citizen SINCLAIR, with the fate of the other four before their eyes, and without the ſhadow of an expectation of eſcaping the ſame inhuman ſentence, went back again from London

London to encounter the malice of their perſecutors, will alſo have its weight with every generous mind; and will aſſiſt with ten-fold energy to ſecure the ultimate triumph of liberty, and of theſe her proven champions: for in defiance of all the rancour of political prejudice, it is impoſſible to behold ſuch conſpicuous magnanimity of principle and conduct without feeling the heart attracted towards the *individuals* and the *cauſe* in which ſuch magnanimity has been diſplayed.

Citizens!

You will pardon me, I know, for the length of this digreſſion, and rather applaud than cenſure me for ſeizing every opportunity of doing juſtice to the characters of thoſe whoſe perſons are deſtined to endure ſo much injuſtice; and who in the midſt of ſufferings which would ſink the guilty authors of their oppreſſion into feminine weakneſs and deſpair, have diſplayed to every individual who has beheld them that manly fortitude—that heroic cheerfulneſs which impreſſes the ſublime conviction that it is guilt and weakneſs alone that can in reality be puniſhed; and that to ſuffer in the cauſe of liberty is not *ſufferance*, but TRIUMPHANT GLORY!

It will be the buſineſs, Citizens, of the comparative ſtatement in this courſe of lectures to ſhew you that the abolition of the Star Chamber did not effectually remedy the evil. That "unfortunately ſome of its practices ſurvived it." That the whole of the miſchief does not conſiſt in "the Attorney General's being ſtill allowed to carry "his information *ex officio* into the court of king's bench; that "the doctrines of the Star Chamber," though ſomewhat palliated and diſguiſed, never were compleatly laid aſide;—that within the laſt four and thirty years the whole deſtructive force of them has been revived, to the great vexation of every advocate of freedom; and that the late libel bill, ſo violently oppoſed by the law lords and judges, and ſo extolled by a parliamentary *party*, though certainly a ſtep in the progreſs of improvement, is far from being a complete antidote to the oppreſſion, or from "aſſuring and confirming to every Engliſhman" a full, fair, and impartial trial "by a jury of his equals, "when accuſed of having written or publiſhed a libel."

The

The line of inveſtigation I mean to purſue will alſo I believe convince you that the rouſing of the human faculties from the long lethargy of the middle ages was the real cauſe why *government* was firſt ſtimulated to *invent* the crimes of *libel* and *verbal ſedition*; that the proſecutions for theſe *ſuppoſed crimes* have encreaſed in a direct ratio with the improvements of human intellect, and the wider diffuſion of political truth; and that conſequently, the enormous growth of proſecutions for political opinion within theſe very few years is a convincing argument that the principles of real liberty are more generally diffuſed, and more perfectly underſtood than in any former period of hiſtory.

At firſt a few favoured ſons of ſcience and philoſophy, only—"men of genius and of enlarged minds, adopted "the principles of liberty, which were as yet, pretty "much unknown to the generality of the people. Sir "Matthew Hales," ſays Hume, in his hiſtory of James II. "had publiſhed a remonſtrance againſt the king's "conduct towards the parliament during this year. "(1604.) The remonſtrance is drawn with great force "of reaſoning and ſpirit of liberty; and was the produc-"tion of Sir Francis Bacon and Sir Edwin Sandys, two "men of the greateſt parts and knowledge in England. "It is drawn in the name of the parliament; but as "there is no hint of it in the journals, we muſt con-"clude either that the authors, ſenſible that the ſtrain "of the piece was much beyond the principles of the "age, had not ventured to preſent it to the houſe, or that "it had been rejected by them." And remonſtrances were not rejected in that reign by the purchaſed majority of a miniſter. In the reign of Charles I. the light had diffuſed itſelf ſomewhat further; and a great majority of virtuous and intelligent gentlemen in the Houſe of Commons were animated by a ſtrong deſire of liberty. By the weight of their property and intereſt, as well as by the popular arts which they cultivated, they urged on the people to deſigns they were not competent to comprehend, and principles by which they were not prepared to be regulated. Of the perſecutions of this reign

which

which *helped forward* their deſigns, I ſhall ſpeak at large hereafter; ſuffice it to ſay at preſent, that though Cromwell's uſurpation checked in ſome degree, the progreſs of political illumination, theſe principles of liberty ſtill continued to extend themſelves through a wider and a wider circle; and though encreaſing proſecutions continued, from the reſtoration, to mark this progreſs, yet ſo long as the effect continued to be circumſcribed to a particular claſs, the *gentler* arts of corruption were relied upon, as of greater efficacy. But now the great maſs of the people is quickened into mental exiſtence: the ſparks that have ſucceſſively been ſtruck off in the different ſtruggles and conteſts for the emoluments of this corruption have flown throughout the whole circle of ſociety; and though the degrees of warmth are diſſimilar, there is ſcarcely an individual, eſpecially in towns and cities, where men are preſſed together ſo that minds can come into contact, that is not in ſome degree animated with the deſire of political enquiry. To enquire, Citizens, is to know that "LIBERTY *is preferable to* SLAVERY;" and that every being is in reality a *ſlave* who is doomed to inceſſant toil without the privileges of a man: without a voice in thoſe regulations of the country by which his life and induſtry are to be diſpoſed of: without equality of rights and importance in the political ſcale. When this ſhall be generally underſtood, (and the violent perſecutions of the times may convince us that there are ſome who apprehend we are advancing rapidly to that period) then will the nation, politically ſpeaking, be incorruptible (for who ſhall be able to corrupt a whole people?).—Liberty ſhall triumph throughout the country, and the deſpotiſm of courts and miniſters ſhall be no more.

Citizens!

You need not be told that the preſent perſecutions that are directed againſt us are meant to avert this glorious and happy period. But let us be undaunted, be active, and vigilant.—Let us ſeize upon the occaſions as they preſent themſelves, and we ſhall turn theſe very perſecutions to our advantage; and the meaſures that

were

were intended to prevent, ſhall haſten the triumphs of Truth and Reaſon.

In ſupport of this opinion I appeal to the experience of hiſtory; and if an impartial ſtatement of facts ſhould demonſtrate that the opinions againſt which the perſecutions of power have been directed have ultimately prevailed—and that the perſecutors themſelves have been frequently the victims of their own intolerant malignity, though *private friendſhip* may regret the ſacrifices that muſt be made, *public virtue* will have but little to fear for the event of a ſtruggle in which the cauſe of liberty may be involved; and the friends of tyranny and ariſtocracy but little foundation to exult in the ſeverities inflicted upon their opponents.

The firſt attempts made in this country for the purpoſe of ſtopping the progreſs of inquiry, were thoſe which, in the beginning of the fifteenth century, were inſtituted againſt the Lollards, or Proteſtant reformers of the times. And though theſe were of the nature of religious perſecution, and my lecture profeſſes only to treat of proſecutions for political opinion, yet I chooſe to begin with theſe, not only becauſe, equally an enemy to tyranny in every ſhape—to the deſpotiſm of the pulpit or the deſpotiſm of the throne, I am unwilling to neglect any opportunity of expoſing the intolerance of either, but becauſe I conſider religious perſecution as a part only of the ſyſtem of ſtate craft and oppreſſion: every eſtabliſhed ſyſtem of religion, from the beginning of hiſtory to the preſent time, being nothing more than a ſpecies of political impoſture;—a ſyſtem of artifice to reſtrain the faculties of the people, and keep them in obedience by bugbears which their rulers have almoſt uniformly deſpiſed. For proof of this aſſertion it is not neceſſary to digreſs ſo far as to appeal to ancient hiſtory, and to remind you how ſtrictly the philoſophers and ſtateſmen of Greece and Rome conformed to the external worſhip of their reſpective countries, and how completely they deſpiſed them in their hearts. The records of modern times are ſufficient for my purpoſe: and we need but look back to that very age of the

Stewarts,

Stewarts, into the infamy of whoſe government it is my profeſſed intention to enquire.

Several curious facts illuſtrating the truth of theſe obſervations, with reſpect to the continental princes of thoſe days, are recorded by Burnet, under the title of "Some Paſſages of the Religion of ſome Princes." —"I will here," ſays he, "tell ſome particulars with "relation to Germany, that Fabricius, the wiſeſt di-"vine I knew among them, told me he had from "Charles Lewis, the Elector Palatine's own mouth." He ſaid, "Frederick II. who firſt reformed the Palati-"nate, whoſe life is ſo curiouſly writ by Thomas Hu-"bert of Liege, reſolved to ſhake off Popery, and to ſet "up Lutheraniſm, in his countrey: but a counſellour of "his ſaid to him, that the Lutherans would allways de-"pend chiefly on the Houſe of Saxony; ſo it would "not become him, who was the firſt Elector, to be "only the ſecond in the party: it was more for his "dignity to become a Calviniſt; he would be the head "of that party; it would give him a great intereſt in "Switzerland, and make the Hugonots of France, and "in the Netherlands, depend on him. He was, by that "determined to declare for the Helvetian confeſſion. "But, upon the ruin of his family, the Duke of New-"burgh had an interview with the Elector of Branden-"burgh about their concerns in Juliers and Cleves: "and he perſuaded that Elector to turn Calviniſt; for "ſince their family was fallen, nothing would more "contribute to raiſe the other than the eſpouſing that "ſide, which would naturally come under his protec-"tion: but, he added, that, for himſelf, he had turned "Papiſt, ſince his little principality lay ſo near both "Auſtria and Bavaria. This that Elector told with a "ſort of pleaſure, when he made it appear that other "Princes had no more ſenſe of religion than he himſelf "had."

And that the ſame political conſiderations mingled themſelves at leaſt with the religion of James, is evident from the following paſſages in Hume, (Hiſt. Eng. vol. v. p. 520 and 523). "The more he knew the puritanical

" clergy, the leſs favour he bore them. He had remarked " in their Scots brethren a violent turn towards repub- " licaniſm, and a zealous attachment to civil liberty; " principles nearly allied to that religious enthuſiaſm " with which they were actuated. He had found, that " the ſame lofty pretenſions which attended them in " their familiar addreſſes to their Maker, of whom they " believed themſelves the peculiar favourites, induced " them to uſe the utmoſt freedoms with their earthly " ſovereign. It had frequently been the practice of " puritanical clergymen to form together certain aſſem- " blies, which they called Propheſyings; where alter- " nately, as moved by the Spirit, they diſplayed their " pious zeal in prayers and exhortations, and raiſed " their own enthuſiaſm as that of their audience, to the " higheſt pitch, from that ſocial contagion which has ſo " mighty an influence on holy fervours, and from the " mutual emulation which aroſe in thoſe trials of reli- " gious eloquence. Such dangerous ſocieties had been " ſuppreſſed by Elizabeth; and the miniſters in this " conference moved the King for their revival; but " James ſharply replied,—If you aim at a Scottiſh Preſ- " bytery, it agrees as well with monarchy as God and " the Devil. There Jack and Tom, and Will and " Dick, ſhall meet and cenſure me and my council. " Therefore I reiterate my former ſpeech: Le Roi " S'aviſera. Stay, I pray, for one ſeven years before " you demand, and then if you find me grow purſie and " fat, I may perchance hearken unto you; for that " government will keep me in breath, and give me " work enough."

It was therefore that both this monarch and his unfortunate ſucceſſor were ſo bigotedly attached to the hierarchy. Biſhops are convenient tools to mould mankind to ſubordination and monarchic government—neceſſary ſteps in the ladder of deſpotiſm; while Preſbytery has a greater tendency to inſpire ideas of liberty and equality.* It is, therefore, alſo, that ſucceeding monarchs have

* Burnet has thus characteriſed the Preſbyterians and Independents of James the Second's time. " The Preſbyterians," ſays he, " liked

have always diſplayed ſo favourable a diſpoſition to extend the principles of toleration to the Roman Catholics, whoſe religion prepares them for ſlavery and implicit obedience, and have regarded with ſo jealous an eye the encroachments of the diſſenters, the very foundations of whoſe faith have a tendency to provoke enquiry.

If the diſſenters therefore underſtood their own intereſt, they would relinquiſh all appeals about religious differences to the government, from which they have nothing to hope, and apply themſelves ſolely and ſtrenuouſly to the reformation of political abuſes; conſcious that when the rational principles of liberty are once eſtabliſhed, no man will be peſtered with religious teſts, or branded with excluſions on account of the articles of his faith.

The perſecutions then, Citizens, of the Lollards and Reformers, with which the war between opinion and authority commenced in this country, ought not to be paſſed over in entire ſilence; the more eſpecially as the inveſtigations, provoked by theſe early champions for individual judgment, may be conſidered as the ſeeds and germs of thoſe more liberal enquiries which have ſince ſhot forth and bloſſomed.—Begin but to enquire,

"liked the civil government, and *limited* monarchy. But, as the "Independents were for a *commonwealth in the ſtate*, ſo they put "*all the power of the church in the people*, and thought that their "choice was an ordination. *Both were enemies to this high prerogative that the King was aſſuming.*" Of all religious ſects the Independents are the firmeſt friends of political liberty. Fanatics and Enthuſiaſts are impatient enough, it is true, of that deſpotiſm, which *reſtrains their own particular opinions;* but they are generally too much blinded with religious (or *political*) *bigotry* to cheriſh the true republican principles of toleration, equality, and impartial freedom of ſentiment and enquiry. Among the diſtinguiſhed actors in the Revolution, that brought Charles to the block, the only true republicans were the Independents and the Deiſts. The Preſbyterians were for *fettering* and reſtoring royalty; and the fanatics were the willing tools of Cromwell's uſurpation. And thus in France, if fanaticiſm and ſuperſtition ſhould revive (and I own, to me, there appears but too much probability of it) Monarchy may indeed be effectually aboliſhed; but tyranny, under ſome new ſhape, will ſtill continue to ravage that devoted country.

(no matter how ridiculous the ſubject) and the human mind (eſpecially if it has the good fortune to meet with a little perſecution) will never fail to make ſuch exertions in the purſuit as will ultimately direct it to the proper point.

For many centuries, from the final overthrow of the Roman empire, Europe had been ſunk in the moſt profound ignorance. What little learning and ſcience yet remained in the world, had retired to Conſtantinople and Alexandria; and had left this faireſt portion of the globe to the dominion of feudal tyrants, who diſdained all knowledge but of the deſtructive arts of hunting and of war, and prieſts, who were incapable of interpretting the jargon which they read: the blaſphemous abſurdities of which were dignified with the name of Religion. But when the morning ſtar of literature, that harbinger of the light of reaſon, began once more to make its appearance in the weſtern horiſon, mankind began to awake and look about them; and the people of this iſland, who (ſince their ſubjection to the Norman robber and his banditti) ſeem to have been ſunk almoſt below the common ſtandard of mental degradation, began, as well as their neighbours, to perceive the innumerable abuſes with which they were ſurrounded and incumbered. At the dawn of enquiry, it is not at all ſurpriſing, that the attention ſhould have been directed, in the firſt inſtance, to the ſubject of religion;—that the firſt ſtruggles, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, of infant liberty, ſhould be to burſt the ſwaithing bands of ſuperſtition that confined its limbs, and, incumbered with which, it would have been impoſſible to have grappled with the monſters of tyranny and deſpotic arrogance that were hovering over the cradle to devour it. In ſhort, religious tyranny was at that time ſo extenſive in its operations, and mingled itſelf ſo much with every concern and function of civil life, that it was impoſſible but this ſhould be the earlieſt object of reformation. As Sir John Brute ſays of marriage—Prieſtcraft "had de-
"bauched their five ſenſes. Every thing they ſaw, every
"thing

" thing they heard, every thing they felt, every thing " they ſmelt, and every thing they taſted, had *prieſt* " in it."

John Wickliffe and his followers, the firſt of the Engliſh reformers, were alſo the firſt objects of *legal* perſecution for opinion. They began to flouriſh towards the end of the fourteenth century; and ſo early as the eighth of Henry IV. 1407 of the vulgar æra, we have a proſecution upon record among the State Trials, againſt maſter William Thorpe, a prieſt, for attempting to break a way through the thick clouds of ceremonies, prejudices, and popiſh ſuperſtitions, and let in the light of human reaſon (as far at leaſt as he underſtood it) upon the deluded faculties of his countrymen. The offence he was charged with, was of a very heinous nature; almoſt as bad as aſſerting, in theſe days, that Kings are not always patterns of divine perfection; that " ty- " rants, who deſtroy the peace and happineſs of the " world," ought to be ſent to the guillotine; or that (if reaſon is appealed to, in preference to ſuperſtitious prejudice) ſome things may be found, even in the Britiſh Conſtitution, which it is poſſible to alter for the better. The accuſation was, that " The thirde Sonday " after Eaſter, the yere of our Lorde MCCCC. and " Seuen, William Thorpe came vnto the Towne of " Shrewisbury, and thorow leaue graunted unto him to " preache: He ſaid openly in Syñt Chaddis Chirche in " his ſermone, that *the ſacrament of the altare after the* " *conſecration was material brede.*"—That is to ſay, that it was not converted into the real body of Jeſus Chriſt: —or, in other words, to borrow an illuſtration from the Tale of a Tub, that *a piece of brown cruſt is not a-fine ſhoulder of mutton.* " And that *ymages ſhulde in no* " *wiſe be worſhiped.*—And that *men ſhulde not go on pil-* " *gremages.*—And that *prieſtes have no title to tythes.*— " And that *it is not lefull for to ſwere in any wiſe.*— " —And when the Archebiſhop had red thus his rolle, " he rolled it up agein, and ſaid to me," (for we have the trial from his own pen) " Ys this holſome learninge

" to

" to be among the people?"—for " *hinc illæ lacrymæ!*" as Gurney ſo properly exclaimed, in anſwer to Mr. Fielding's lamentation, that political truths ſhould be ſold in twopenny pamphlets.—This is the cauſe of lamentation with the ſtate hypocrites of every age and profeſſion, that information ſhould be diſſeminated among the people. Men whoſe elevated ſituations render them too *wiſe* to practiſe what they know, may improve themſelves in political ſcience; and biſhops and cardinals may be as great *infidels* and *atheiſts* as they pleaſe; but that truth ſhould be diſſeminated upon political and theological ſubjects among thoſe who have an intereſt in emancipating themſelves from prieſtcraft and ſtate jugglers—this is the crime!—this is the abomination! and dungeons, fetters, and tranſportation muſt be prepared for thoſe who venture upon the audacious experiment. That Thorpe, who was himſelf a prieſt, ſhould preach againſt the lawfulneſs of tythes, was a proof of purity and diſintereſtedneſs of principle, which, to a being of the ſmalleſt candour and liberality, muſt have rendered him an object of eſteem. But the archbiſhop of Canterbury and his brother inquiſitors (like Judge Jefferies upon the trial of Sidney, and the judges of the court of Juſticiary in a more recent tranſaction) could diſcover that the integrity of his principle was an additional provocation of his crime, ſince the man who is actuated only by a ſelfiſh ambition may be bought over as ſoon as he is dangerous, but he who is prompted by a virtuous conviction will be found to perſevere to the end.

Thorpe, who appears to have been a man of conſiderable eloquence, for his time, defended himſelf with a great deal of fortitude; and appears from the following, among other paſſages, to have had a due contempt for thoſe trappings of vanity and oſtentation which eſtabliſhments, either religious or political, are ſo apt to ſubſtitute in place of principle and ſound morality. " But I ſaid, Sir, luſty men and worldly louers delyte " and couete, and trauell to haue all their wittes quick-

" ened

" ened and ſharpened with diuerſe ſenſible ſolace: but " all the feithful louers and folowers of Chriſte haue all " their delyte to heare Godde's worde, and to under- " ſtond it truely, and to worke therafter faithfully and " continually." He was, however, conſigned to the cuſtody of the inferior inquiſitors, " was led forth, and " brought into a foul unhoneſt priſon," where he languiſhed and in all probability died; for he was never heard of any more.

The prieſtly politicians or politic prieſts (for all political perſecution is prieſtcraft and ſuperſtition, and all prieſtcraft and ſuperſtition is political tyranny) having once dipped themſelves in the guilt of inquiſitorial vengeance, were not eaſily appeaſed. Like the young tyger, having once taſted of blood, their raging appetite was never to be ſatisfied with the inhuman banquet. Six years afterwards (1413) the very commencement of the reign of that ferocious butcher of the human race, the boaſted Henry V. was ſtained by the inveterate perſecution of the virtuous Sir John Oldcaſtle Lord Cobham; a perſecution the guilt of which lays fairly at the door of this idolized *aſſaſſin*,* ſince it was commenced and carried on under the auſpices of his expreſs conſent and approbation. The biſhops accuſed, and the King remonſtrated; but Oldcaſtle had the ſeditious and rebellious firmneſs to aſſert his opinions even in the preſence of Majeſty. Henry knew that prieſtcraft was the neceſſary crutch of royalty, and that the rebel who dared to queſtion his theological infallibility might in time have the blaſphemous preſumption to queſtion alſo his political omnipotency: for when enquiry is once begun who ſhall determine its boundaries? He gave him up therefore at once to the inquiſitorial fury of Arundel, Archbiſhop of Canterbury, and the reſt of the loyal aſſociators for the protection of *the* LIBERTY

* See, at the battle of Agincourt, his inhuman order for cutting the throats of all the priſoners, But neceſſity ſanctifies maſſacre, when practiſed by the Lord's anointed. The imminent danger of a whole people cannot juſtify it in a republic, though practiſed againſt notorious traitors.

and

and PROPERTY *of the church*:—for *churchmen* as well as *placemen* and *penſioners* have their *excluſive* liberties and properties to defend againſt the innovating doctrines of reaſon and reformation.

On the 25th Sept. in this firſt year of Henry V. Cobham was condemned to excommunication and the Tower, for refuſing, among other things of a like deſcription, to declare "that after the ſacramentall wordes be ones "ſpoken by a prieſt in his maſſe, the material bread, that "was before bread, is turned" (*hocus pocus!*) "into "Chriſtes very body; and the materyall Wyne, is "turned into Chryſtes very bloud; and ſo there re-"mayneth in the ſacrament of the aulter, from thens-"forth, no materyall breade, nor materiall wyne, which "were there before the ſacramentall wordes were ſpok-"en." *St. Tri.* vol. 1. p. 41.

Cobham, however, with that independent ſpirit which is the fruit of diſintereſted conviction, appealed to the people in a PLACARD, which he procured to be poſted about the town; and which had conſiderable effect upon the public. The ASSOCIATORS endeavoured to combat this with forged confeſſions and other pious frauds, ſo conſiſtent with the general ſpirit of the bigoted upholders of eſtabliſhments and ancient abuſes. "And whan they perceyued that polycye wolde not "helpe, but made more and more againſt them, than "ſought they out another falſe practyſe." (Mark, Citizens, I pray you, this great prototype of modern politics! this ſtrong coincidence between *the popery of the conclave* and *of the cabinet!*) "They went vnto the king with a "moſt greuouſe complaint lyke as they did afore in his "father's tyme, that in euery quarter of the realme, by "reaſon of Wickleues opinions, and the ſaid lord Cob-"ham, were wonderful *contentions*, *rumours*, TUMULTES, "UPROURS, *confederations*, *diſſencions*, *diuiſions*, *differ-"ences*, *diſcordes*, *harmes*, *ſlaunders*, *ſciſmes*, *ſectes*, SE-"DICIONS, *perturbacions*, *parels*, UNLAWFUL ASSEM-"BLIES, *variaunces*, *ſtrifes*, *ſyghtinges*, REBELLIOUSE "RUFFELINGS, and dayly INSURRECTIONS!!!!" *St. Tr. vol.* 1. *p.* 48.

Behold,

Behold, Citizens, the ſources of the enlightened politics of miniſters at the cloſe of the eighteenth century! Admire no longer the inventive faculties of your *heaven born Miniſter!* This is the *original:* the proclamation of Nov. 1792, was but the tranſlation! Wonder no longer where Sir James Saunderſon, and his patron found their plots, their treaſons, and their inſurrections. They found them not it is true in our ſtreets or villages, in our commercial cities, or our provincial towns, but they found them in the records of former perſecutions, *among the lying inventions of the* ENGLISH INQUISITION *at the commencement of the fifteenth century.*

One of theſe pretended inſurrections, according to loyal report, took place in St. Giles's fields.—"The "complaint was made vnto the King of them, that they "made a greate aſſemble in Sainct Gyls Felde at Lon-"don, purpoſing *the deſtruction of the land*, and the "*ſubuercyon of the commonwelth.* As the King was "thus infourmed, he erected a banner (ſaith Walden) "with a croſſe thereupon, as the Pope doth comonly "by his legate, whan he pretendeth to warre againſt the "Turke; and with a great nombre of men entered the "ſame felde, *where as he found no ſuch company.*" (Like the dreadful inſurgents that were to have planted the tree of liberty on Kennington-common, or the more recent rebels of Blackheath, they had put on the cloke of darkneſs, and become inviſible; and the loyal heroes who, armed cap-a-pee, had iſſued forth to ſcour the infected country of *heretical ſedition*, after turning over every ſtone, and ſearching under every dock-leaf for the lurking incendiaries, returned with no other advantage than the appetite they had gained by their excurſion in the freſh air.) "Yet was the complaint "judged true, becauſe the byſhoppes had ſpoken it, at the information of their prieſtes." *Ib.* p. 49.

But the parallel is not completed; and I ſhall continue the quotation, that I may ſhew you the antiquity of the marriage—or rather concubinage between church and ſtate: a concubinage which has been ſubject indeed to ſome occaſional incontinences—(the State, for its own convenience, changing its holy miſtreſs upon particular emer-

gencies,

gencies!) but which has been uniform in its principle—the mutual pillage and oppreſſion of the people!—"The "church (they ſaid) was hated; the dioceſanes were "not obeyed; the ordinaries were not regarded;" &c. "the lawes and liberties of holy church"—for when was there a tyrant or perſecutor to be found who could not talk of conſtitutions, laws and liberties, at the very time when he was trampling all liberty under foot, by his lawleſs authority? "The lawes and liberties of holy "church," (the laws that declared bread and wine to be fleſh and blood—and the liberty of perſecuting every body who diſſented from the opinion) "were troden "vndre fote" (not of *the ſwiniſh multitude*, that epithet was reſerved for a more *enlightened age!)* "the Chryſ-"ten fayth was ruinouſly decayed;" (they had their cry of Atheiſm too!) "God's ſervice was laught too "ſcorne; the ſpiritual juriſdictyon, authorite, honour, "power, polycy, lawes, rytes, *ceremonies, curſes, keyes,* "*cenſures*, and *canonical ſanctions of the church* were "had in vttre contempt.---This would be (they ſayd) a "deſtruction to the commonwelth, a ſubuercion to the "land, and an utter decay of the Kinges eſtate ryall, *if* "*remedy were not ſought in tyme.*—And this" (continues the writer of the trial) "was their policy, to cou-"ple the Kinges auctorite wyth that they had done in "theyr former councell of craft, and ſo to make it "thereby the ſtronger." And what do you ſuppoſe, Citizens! this *remedy* was that was *to be ſought in time?* —The King *called a parliament together in a great hurry*, at Leiceſter; and the people were plunged into a mad and unjuſtifiable war againſt France, whoſe avowed object (for the cabinet of Henry the Fifth had courage and ſincerity enough to avow its object in the firſt inſtance) was to impoſe a monarch upon that country whom the people neither deſired nor would accept. And thus we ſee that the project of ſtopping the progreſs of political enquiry, by plunging into ſcenes of unjuſtifiable carnage, and depopulating the towns and villages, and waſting the treaſures of the country, in order to diſappoint the *ſeditious* views of reformers, and advocates

vocates for the rights of man, has the recommendation of conſiderable antiquity, and is by no means attributable to the ſublime invention of the preſent cabinet.

War, however, was not to be confided in alone. Perſecution for opinion was renewed with increaſed avidity. An act of parliament was paſſed, prohibiting by ſanguinary penalties the reading of the ſcriptures in the mother tongue, (that is to ſay, the diffuſion of information, ſuch as it was, among the people) and declaring all ſuch ſeditious perſons as ſhould ſo read "heretykes to God, enemies to the crowne, and moſt errant traitors to the lande." Beſides this, it was enacted, that no ſanctuary, nor privileged ground ſhould ſhelter them, though they were permitted to thieves and murderers; but that if they perſevered in theſe *rebellious* practices, they ſhould firſt be hanged for treaſon againſt the king, and then be burned for hereſy againſt God.

CITIZENS! I could mention to you, alſo, another reign in which murderers have not only been pardoned, but penſioned, while even juſtice could not be obtained in behalf of thoſe who had been found guilty of enlightening the people.

Cobham had offended beyond all hope of mercy. He had carried his ſedition to the moſt extravagant extent: for he had not only expoſed the corruptions of the clergy, but had been twice the occaſion (once in the days of Rich. II. anno 1365, and again in thoſe of Hen. IV. 1410) of a bill being brought into parliament to reform ſome of the abuſes which their waſteful pride and extravagance had introduced. This bill had been introduced again in the parliament of Leiceſter, and was preſſed with conſiderable firmneſs;—for parliaments were not always ſo complaiſant as the preſent; and the fury of the eſtabliſhment was encreaſed by the danger that threatened theſe profitable corruptions. Perſecution raged in every part of the country; falſe alarms were diſſeminated, and armies led into the fields to diſperſe ſeditious meetings that never had any exiſtence but in the inventive brains of ſtate jugglers; innumerable victims were immolated; and emigration was appeal-

ed to by crowds, who diſdained ſubmiſſion to the prevailing tyranny, and preferred abandoning their country to relinquiſhing their principles. In the mean time Cobham eſcaped out of the Tower of London in the night, and fled into Wales; where he remained four years, ſhifting from place to place, till he was betrayed by the pretended friendſhip and affection of lord Powys. This *noble Judas*, ſeduced by lordly gifts and promiſes, ſent his friend and gueſt a priſoner to London, where on the 14th of Dec. 1418, he was convicted of *herſy* and *treaſon*; for which, on the 25th of the ſame month, he was burned alive.

CITIZENS! The noble conſtancy of this martyr deſerves perpetual admiration; and though I hope mankind are now too far advanced in the purſuits of reaſon and philoſophy to throw away their lives, or even their breath, upon *theological* diſputes and ſubtleties, yet as even the creed of lord Cobham was TRUTH, compared with the monſtrous and tyrannous abſurdities of the exiſting eſtabliſhment, it may ſhew us the impotency even of the moſt inhuman tortures to ſuppreſs the progreſs of human reaſon, or ſubdue the manly and heroic ſpirit that pants for the goal of mental or political liberty.

The cruel preparations for his torments could make no impreſſion of terror upon him, nor ſhock his illuſtrious conſtancy; and unawed by the approach of death, he continued to exhort the multitude, at the place of execution, to perſevere in that purſuit of truth for which he ſuffered. "In him," ſays the record, "were ſeen "united the fearleſs ſpirit of a ſoldier, and the holy re-"ſignation of a true Chriſtian."

Such, CITIZENS, was the unconquerable ardour with which Britons, even in ages comparatively barbarous, contended and ſuffered for thoſe partial truths which in the dawn of enquiry they had diſcovered.

Shall we then, when the full meridian rays of truth and philoſophy are burſting upon us, be leſs animated by the invigorating warmth? Could not the utmoſt malice of the inquiſition—the gibbet and the conſuming fire check the progreſs of enquiry into the meaning and

inter-

interpretation of a few obſcure texts of ſcripture? and ſhall fines, pillories, and impriſonments,—the dungeons of Newgate and the inhoſpitable regions of Botany Bay intimidate thoſe who are contending, not for a text or a fragment of a particular book, which may have been a thouſand times interpolated and altered, and whoſe origin, no individual can accurately trace, but about the ſenſe and context of the whole authentic and indiſputable volume of nature?—Not whether this ſhall be called bread and that be looked upon as wine; but whether MAN or BRUTE ſhall be written in the title page of that book which is to record the hiſtory and decide the happineſs or miſery of countleſs myriads of our fellow creatures.

The doctrines of Wickliffe, and the ſentiments of theſe brave reformers triumphed in the end over the fury of their oppoſers. And though the progreſs was ſlow, it was only ſo in proportion as the means of diffuſing information were few and feeble! The engines of truth are now encreaſed an hundred fold, and the advancement of human mind is proportionately rapid.

"If we do not ſilence the preſs," ſaid cardinal Wolſey, "the preſs will ſilence us." Fortunately for mankind the preſs *cannot* be ſilenced. Placemen and penſioners may *aſſociate* for ever; inquiſitions may be eſtabliſhed, and the Nilus of corruption may pour forth its monſter broods of ſpies and informers; but wherever the preſs has once been eſtabliſhed on a broad foundation, liberty muſt ultimately triumph. It is eaſier to ſweep the whole human race from the ſurface of the earth than to ſtop the torrent of information and political improvement, when the art of printing has attained its preſent height. Already has tyranny been driven by this powerful engine from many of his ſtrongeſt holds. The infallibility of the prieſthood—the divine right of kings---the doctrine of non-reſiſtance---the unqualified veneration for birth and title---the bulwarks of religious intolerance---all theſe once ſuppoſed impregnable fortreſſes have either yielded in their turn to the irreſiſtable artillery of reaſon, or continue at preſent to make but feeble

feeble reſiſtance. Preſs forward then, Citizens, with zeal and ardour, and be aſſured of approaching victory. Examine boldly the fortifications that are thrown up againſt you, and you will find them ſtill more unſtable in their foundations and more untenable than thoſe you have already paſſed. Formerly religious enquiry was to be the excluſive myſtery of a few intereſted traders: the prieſts and jugglers initiated in the ſacred calling. Our ſpiritual ſalvation was to be wrought we knew not how; by prayers and maſſes which we could not comprehend; by the *hocus pocus* of the prieſt behind the curtain: and he who preſumed to diffuſe theological information among the people was a diſturber and an enemy to ſociety. Now it is admitted that in matters of religion, ſo as he have but *ſome*, every man may enquire and think for himſelf; may take care of his ſoul in his own private way, and read what opinions he thinks fit. But though the veil of the ſanctuary is rent in twain, the curtain of the cabinet muſt be kept entire; and the *political* popes and conclaves muſt remain undiſturbed and unqueſtioned in their *ſanctum ſanctorum*. As for your ſouls, indeed, the higher powers have found that they muſt leave thoſe to your own management, but the welfare of your bodies and temporal concerns are to be reſigned implicitly to the care of cardinals Pitt and Richmond, to whom (for the ſake of the trinity) Loughborough has of late been added. Placemen and penſioners are the prieſts and confeſſors of the time, to whoſe eye alone the volume of political revelation is to be unfolded; and he who has the ſeditious preſumption to expound a ſingle text to the multitude, or teach to the great body of the people the elements of that ſcience in which the happineſs and proſperity of the great body of the people are involved, muſt expect the ſtorms of miniſterial vengeance and the thunders of the royal vatican. But ſhall theſe intimidate and ſtop us in the glorious career of truth and virtue?—No, citizens! the champions for the rights and happineſs of mankind ſhall vanquiſh theſe as they have vanquiſhed former difficulties; but as truth and liberty have acquired additional energy in their courſe, they ſhall be ſur-

mounted

mounted with greater celerity. The names of Gerrald and Margarot, of Skirving, Muir and Palmer ſhall re-ſound continually in our ears; and, fired by their illuſtrious example, we will preſs forward till our brows are crowned with the wreaths of victory: and our memory ſhall be embalmed with theirs, by the gratitude and admiration of mankind.

FINIS.

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